

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 985

CE 071 178

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TITLE Illinois Education for Employment System Director
Perceptions of the Federal Role and Federal Block
Grant Proposals in Vocational Education.
PUB DATE Jul 95
NOTE 60p.; Master of Science in Education research paper,
Southern Illinois University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; Adult Education; *Block
Grants; Federal Aid; *Federal Government; *Government
Role; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education;
State Surveys; *Vocational Directors; *Vocational
Education
IDENTIFIERS *Illinois

ABSTRACT

A study solicited perceptions of 60 Illinois Education for Employment (EFE) system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs; 88 percent responded. Its more specific focus was the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs. A literature review focused on the federal role in funding vocational education programs. Studies addressing federal educational block grants since 1981 were also reviewed. The directors' responses included the following: (1) the federal government should assume a reduced role in the administration of vocational education; (2) state and local administrators were ready to assume the increased responsibility necessitated by a reduced federal role; (3) the federal government should maintain a presence in guiding the vocational education field with respect to new and developing industries; and (4) the federal government should require comprehensive program coordination between students and available jobs. Most directors seemed to appreciate the flexibility and increased responsibility offered by the block grant. Their perception of the ideal role of the federal government appeared to be one of assistance in the development of comprehensive vocational education planning and occupational training in new and developing industries. (Appendixes include a 36-item bibliography, survey instrument, correspondence, and results summary.) (YLB)

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ILLINOIS EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM DIRECTOR
 PERCEPTIONS OF THE FEDERAL ROLE AND FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT
 PROPOSALS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
 of the Requirements for the Master of Science in Education Degree

Department of Workforce Education and Development
 in the Graduate School

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

July, 1995

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Entitled

ILLINOIS EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE

FEDERAL ROLE AND FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT PROPOSALS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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Master of Science in Education

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

JOHN M. SCHERBAUM, for the Master of Science degree in Workforce, Education and Development, presented on July 6, 1995, at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

TITLE: Illinois Education for Employment System Director Perceptions of the Federal Role and Federal Block Grant Proposals in Vocational Education

MAJOR ADVISOR: Dr. John S. Washburn

This document reports the perceptions of Illinois Education for Employment system directors concerning the role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed implementation of federal block grants. Specifically addressed in the study is the preferability of a federal vocational education block grant. This report discusses the history of federal funding for vocational education, identifies existing research on block grants, and describes the survey methods used to collect data for this study. Findings were based on 88 percent of the sample of 60 Illinois system directors.

The results of this study provide a picture of the anticipated response to delivery of federal vocational education funds through block grants. Most system directors seemed to appreciate the flexibility and increased responsibility which might be offered by the block grant. They did not, however, believe that federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants, or that federal funding would be more effective using block grants.

Overall, system directors thought that the federal role in vocational education program should be reduced to one of assistance in the development of comprehensive vocational education planning between students and available jobs, and occupational training for new and developing industries. The survey is appended.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am particularly appreciative of Dr. John S. Washburn for serving as my committee chair. His guidance in this research paper extended from the very inception of the topic to the closing paragraphs. Rather than being overwhelmed by the indecisiveness of a generalist, he assumed a leadership role and provided meaningful direction, the result of which was a successful and enjoyable research effort.

I also extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Bill G. Gooch, Graduate Coordinator for the Department and member of my committee. Dr. Gooch was my first contact at SIU and provided words of wisdom as I progressed through the admission process. It was refreshing dealing with a person who was honest, tactful and sincere all at the same time. I regret that scheduling conflicts never allowed me the opportunity to enroll in one of his courses.

Final recognition goes to Dr. Jacquelyn King, a member of my committee and instructor for two courses. Dr. King's teachings have inspired me to constantly evaluate and upgrade my instructional approach and to appreciate the audience with which I am interacting. I endeavor to reach her level of consciousness and skill in the realm of interpersonal communication.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

Vocational education is perceived by many educators as an essential element of a nation's economic development program (Hartle & Rosenfeld, 1984). As science and technology make industry both more competitive and less in need of unskilled labor, education and workforce training must provide a basis for adaptability to changing roles and occupations based less on manual skills and more on analytical, service, and managerial skills. Thus, education and workforce training have an important role in economic growth (Lederman & Windus, 1971).

Federal workforce policies and programs can make special contributions to economic stability and growth. They can reduce inflationary pressures, increase worker productivity, increase employment, and help solve the special problems of individuals and groups. Consequently, federal programs that support economic development usually include provisions authorizing the funding of state-run programs for vocational education (Hartle & Rosenfeld, 1984).

For many years, Congress has been asking questions about federal accountability for state-run vocational education programs and services (App, 1991). Some suggest that the categorical programs and services of the sixties and seventies, which drew the federal government into the education realm, have not delivered as expected. It now appears that members of Congress believe the local level of government to be best suited for educational reform and addressing the nation's rapidly changing education and training needs.

The push toward decentralization of education policy begun under the Reagan presidency continues today. In initiating the movement, "the administration was interested in de-emphasizing federal responsibilities in education and increasing the autonomy and responsibility of state and local education agencies" (Clark, Astuto & Rooney, 1983, p. 189).

It was believed that replacing categorical aid programs with educational block grants to the states would go far in disengaging the federal government from educational policy and programs, which were considered by many to be ineffective and inefficient.

The distinction between education as a national concern but a state and local responsibility is important in understanding the drive to get the federal government out of the education business. Many politicians and educators are convinced that the management of educational programs and services can best be handled by the states and localities (Clark, Astuto & Rooney, 1983). Their ideal view of the federal involvement in education stops at the provision of funding.

The 104th Congress, continuing with the decentralization of education, is proposing a contracted federal role and new funding policies for vocational education programs and services. The President, general opposition party leaders and Republicans alike have proposed legislation to consolidate federal job training programs, and in the process fold some of them into block grants. As expected, a common element of recent proposals is the devolution upon the states, through block grants, of existing federal programs and educational resources (Wirt, 1981).

The field of vocational education, having opposed block grant financing since the beginning of the New Federalism, finds itself once again defending the categorical delivery

of federal monies. The current momentum in Congress for budget cuts and educational reform, however, threatens to override the protests and install a vocational education block grant regardless of opposition.

The block grant, which by definition can be used for broadly defined educational purposes, was a response to the problems encountered in the categorical delivery of programs and funds from Washington to local education agencies. The Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) Chapter 2 block grant created under the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 consolidated 28 categorical education programs. It was designed to give power back to the states and to reduce the role of the federal government in education (Clark, Astuto & Rooney, 1983). It has proven effective at both of these, and is generally accepted by those who have been affected by it as preferable to the previous categorical aid.

Last year, according to a General Accounting Office report, the federal government spent about \$20 billion on 163 employment and training programs administered by 15 different agencies (Sommerfeld, 1995). From the legislative atmosphere in Washington, it appears as though there has been a direct policy shift with respect to selected aspects of federal funding of vocational education. Washington's renewed pledge to cut taxes and downsize government, as well as the change in Congressional leadership, has signaled to advocates of education that reduced federal funding of their programs may be in the making.

The relentless demand for educational reform has states and localities calling for increased flexibility in how they spend federal money for state-run education for employment programs. Used as a funding vehicle for a number of other education fields

and known for its flexibility, the block grant is now being considered as the primary delivery method for federal vocational education funds.

Proponents of block grants, citing the Chapter 2 educational block grant, claim that states and localities experience greater flexibility over how they used federal dollars, and a reduction in administrative burden. It is their argument that the current proposals to consolidate federal job-training programs, and in the process fold some of them into block grants, would do the same for the field of vocational education (Johnston, 1995).

Opponents of this delivery vehicle anticipate that aid may be reduced in dollar amount when compared with aid received categorically. The expectation is that consolidation may result in gradual reduction of federal aid, as happened in the areas of health and law enforcement. Additionally, opponents of block grant funding claim this funding vehicle is no better than categorical aid.

With the need to develop a closer linking of education and employment programs, and technological changes occurring in the economy and the workplace at an unprecedented rate, it seems necessary, more than ever, to clarify the desired and intended role of federal funding for vocational education. In order to address this issue, Illinois Education for Employment (EFE) system directors were surveyed concerning their views of federal block grant funding.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to solicit perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs. More specifically, the study focused on the changing role of the federal government in

vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs.

Statement of the Problem

What are the attitudes and perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs and services?

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors concerning the federal role in vocational education?
2. What are the perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding the proposed delivery of federal funds through block grants?

Definition of Terms

Federal Block Grant: Federal aid authorized for a wide range of activities within a broadly defined functional area. Recipients, general purpose state and local government units, have substantial discretion in identifying problems and designing programs and allocating resources to deal with them. Elected officials and administrative generalists serve as the decisionmakers. Administrative, fiscal reporting, planning and other federally imposed requirements are kept to a minimum (Turnbull & Marks, 1986).

Illinois Education for Employment System Director: Funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education, Illinois EFE system

directors are hired by consortia of local school districts to provide regional vocational education coordination for elementary/secondary programs and services.

Significance of the Study

The true importance of federal funding for vocational education is not demonstrated by the total dollars spent for this purpose. The federal vocational education dollar allocations account for only about 10% of all vocational education spending (Jaschik, 1990). Most funding comes from state and local sources. These funds, however, have proven effective at providing both leverage for national priorities and the extra margin that allows for the development of new programs and the improvement of existing ones. These funds have allowed the federal government to assume a leadership role in vocational education by selecting the target populations and the curriculum of the programs (Lewis, 1989).

This study is significant since a difference in opinion exists concerning the preferability of a vocational education block grant. The field of vocational education has resisted all previous attempts to move it to federally funded block grant administration. In addressing the research questions and summarizing the attitudes of Illinois EFE system directors regarding various issues pertaining to the block grant, this study will lend itself to assessing their favorability of the vocational education block grant.

This study addresses the urgent attempt of the federal government to reform delivery of educational aid to state-run vocational education programs and services. A valuable contribution is made by clarifying the current opinion about federal block grant funding as held by Illinois EFE system directors. Their fundamental objections or support

may also prove to be representative on a broader scale to other state and local vocational administrators.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

History of the Federal Role in Funding Vocational Education

The purpose of the study was to solicit perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs. More specifically, the study focused on the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs. Literature on the federal role in funding vocational education was reviewed. Studies addressing federal educational block grants since 1981 were also reviewed.

The Federal Government has supported vocational education since 1917 when it enacted the Federal Vocational Education Act (Smith-Hughes Act), the result of which was the establishment and extension of vocational education in high schools. The Act was a response to the need for trained workers during World War I. Activities included in the Act were limited to the areas of agriculture, home economics, trade, and industrial subjects. A number of substantial revisions were made in the 1950's, which expanded the programs to include training in scientific and technical fields (Lederman & Windus, 1971).

It was during the 1960's, however, when further changes in the character and scope of work-related education programs were seen in a variety of new laws. The 1961 Area Redevelopment Act provided job training in economically depressed areas, the 1962 Manpower Development and Training Act provided training for workers with outdated skills, the 1962 Trade Expansion Act provided training for workers who lost their jobs

because of foreign competition, and the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments provided training for people on relief (Lederman & Windus, 1971).

These new programs were aimed at specific groups in the population who were adversely affected by economic and technological conditions, whereas previous vocational education had been directed at the general population. Later expansions brought programs for work-study, residential vocational schools, physically handicapped persons, the economically disadvantaged, and veterans.

Byerly, Morrow & Langerman (1978) noted that until the passage of the National Defense Education Act (N.D.E.A.) of 1958, states' rights in setting objectives and priorities for spending federal dollars for categorical or formula-based programs were adhered to strictly. The role of the federal government was limited to a review of the budgetary reports with little interest and virtually no involvement in the substance of the programs. The N.D.E.A. was the premiere program in introducing the new role that the federal government was to play in providing financial aid to the states and local governments for the next twenty years.

The 1981 Education Consolidation and Improvement Act moved federal aid to elementary and secondary education from strictly categorical grants to block grants that were designed to give more responsibility to state and local governments. These block grants were given to state and local educational authorities for programs to improve elementary and secondary education for students in public and private schools (Congressional Budget Office, 1993).

Otherwise known as Chapter 2, the transition generally met with little resistance. As noted by Turnbull & Marks (1986), this was not the case for vocational education. "The massive opposition in the early 1980's to the federal proposal to put vocational and handicapped education funds into a block grant illustrated the reaction that can arise when sizable constituencies are threatened" (Turnbull & Marks, 1986, p.62).

The block grant emerged from this twenty year period of federal intervention in education as the first major step in federal education policy to alter the balance of discretion in favor of the local level (Knapp, 1986). Burrup (1988) states that no longer is the debate whether or not the federal government can be involved as a partner in funding education. The question now is, what is the best method of delivering the money.

Research on Surveys of Practitioners Regarding the Federal Role in Vocational Education

Nunez & Russell (1982) reported the findings of a survey of state legislators conducted in the fall of 1981 that included a section exploring various aspects of financing and goal setting for vocational education and the relationship between federal and state authority. The state legislators agreed that the federal government had a legitimate role in public vocational education and that it should have a continued role. The states, however, should have greater control in determining how federal vocational education funds are spent and in determining priorities.

A later study by the United States Comptroller General (1984) which focused on the federal block grant to elementary and secondary education found that:

“overall, local education agency officials viewed the block grant as more flexible and less burdensome than the prior categorical programs and found it to be a more desirable way of funding education programs” (U.S. Comptroller General, 1984, p.vii).

State officials were less enthusiastic on the desirability of the block grant, but still supportive. In only one of the eleven states surveyed did education officials consider block grants no different or worse than categorical grants.

Turnbull & Marks (1986) conducted a study on The Education Block Grant and Intergovernmental Relations: Effects at the Local Level which was designed to measure the degree of administrative flexibility experienced at the local level as a result of the consolidation of several federal categorical grants into the Chapter 2 block grant. It was found that local administrators saw the block grant as a highly flexible source of funds. In fact, many coordinators considered the Chapter 2 block grant to be more flexible than their own local funds.

A study by Knapp (1986) recognized that the focus of federal and state policies in recent years has been on educational improvement and considered whether block grants are an effective vehicle for this purpose. The findings were mixed, but generally supported the idea that block grants reduce administrative burden and enhance local discretion.

Miller (1982) in surveying state vocational education directors found that a majority of directors interviewed were opposed to a block grant for vocational education. They believed it would result in a reduction in overall funding and a lack of accountability for the needs of target populations and would give the states too much flexibility. One respondent went so far as to predict that federal block grants to the states for vocational

education would result in the diffusion of national priorities. A majority of directors were also opposed to a consolidation of vocational and adult education, believing a reduction in funding would follow.

Summary of Literature and Research

1. Since the inception of the educational block grant, the field of vocational education has resisted delivery of federal funds through this vehicle.
2. The attitudes of vocational education administrators toward federal block grant funding have not appeared to soften over the years.
3. The new emphasis on educational reform has revived proposals to implement block grant delivery of federal funds for vocational education programs.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS & PROCEDURES

Description of Research Type

The purpose of the study was to solicit perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs. More specifically, the study focused on the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs.

In utilizing a survey, the study employed descriptive research. The survey items assessed the current perceptions and attitudes of Illinois EFE system directors regarding the role of the federal government in vocational education, and the proposed delivery of federal funds for state-run education for employment programs and services through block grants. The goal of the survey was to develop generalizations regarding these two issues.

Subjects

The most current listing of Illinois' 60 regional EFE systems served as the population for the study. The listing provided the names and addresses of board of control, fiscal agent and system director administrators. They are all members of the Illinois State Board of Education's Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education funded system for delivery of regional vocational education programs and services. They do not, however, work for the State Board of Education directly.

The study was originally undertaken with a listing which was not the latest available. This proved to be unsatisfactory, since many of the names and addresses had changed in the short period of time between this listing and the most recent. Once the discrepancy was detected, the researcher updated the study.

Based on their qualifications to respond to the survey statements, only the system directors were chosen to participate in the study. They are most likely to deal with day to day issues affecting vocational education. The implementation of federal block grants for vocational education is of particular interest to them. Demographic characteristics of this targeted population were not collected since the focus of the survey was on obtaining the aggregate opinions and attitudes of the system directors, and not on their characteristics as individuals.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument consisted of a cover page and two pages of statements. The cover letter (Appendix A) was carefully constructed to establish the survey's legitimacy and professional intent. It included a brief description of the study's purpose, assured the recipients that their responses were confidential, and cited a deadline for responses. Results of the study were offered as a reward for participation.

A 20 item closed-form type of questionnaire was used to qualitatively describe the opinions of the system directors (Appendix B). It was chosen for its ease of completion, minimal time requirement, objectivity, and simplicity of data tabulation and analyzation. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire

borrowed items from a questionnaire developed by Nunez and Russell in 1982 for the United States Department of Education that related to the federal role in vocational education. The second set of statements, relating to block grant funding, was based on a 1982 study by Miller that surveyed state vocational education directors.

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 10 statements regarding the federal government's role in vocational education. The second section presented 10 statements addressing the topic of federal funding for vocational education programs through block grants. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with these statements using a five point Likert scale. The controversial subject of a federal vocational education block grant was the main focus of the study. However, the role of the federal government in vocational education was also considered, since the two are interrelated.

Recognizing that this questionnaire had a limited purpose, a short life, and was administered to a limited population, the instrument's validity and reliability were difficult to establish. The survey items, however, did sample a significant aspect of the purpose of the investigation. As this was a study of opinions, each survey item addressed a current aspect of either the federal role or federal block grant funding for vocational education. Validity of the opinionnaire was supported by confirming that the instrument items reflected current theory. The response rate of 88% also suggested that data obtained were of reasonable validity.

In that the participants can be assumed to have a genuine interest in the problem under study, there was a sound basis for generalization. The respondents were carefully

chosen for their knowledge of the topic. A good amount of confidence may be placed in data. During the development of the instrument, the survey statements were reviewed for clarity and objectivity. Additionally, respondents were allowed to remain anonymous, improving the likelihood that the responses were honest and objective.

The instrument was designed to elicit responses from Illinois EFE system directors that could quickly lead to a generalization as to their opinions regarding the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs in Illinois. Essentially, the instrument was an attempt to measure their receptiveness to federal block grant funding of vocational education.

Illinois EFE system directors received this opinionnaire in May of 1995. The questionnaire was administered through the mail. Data were collected between May and June 1995.

Procedures

The opinionnaire was administered by distributing copies of the instrument via first class mail. Each Illinois EFE system director was mailed an opinionnaire on May 16, 1995. A cover letter accompanied the opinionnaire. It explained that participation was voluntary and that responses would be kept confidential and reported in aggregated form only. Information specifying that the study was being conducted under the guidance of Dr. John Washburn and that it had received approval from the Carbondale Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (Appendix C) was also given. Lastly, mention was

made that results of the survey would be made available to all participants. A self-addressed, postage-paid envelope was included.

Participants were asked to respond within fifteen days. A total of 60 questionnaires were administered, and 36 completed questionnaires were returned before the cutoff date, for a response rate of 60%.

The survey instruments were numerically coded in the upper right hand corner of the first page of statements. This coding system was used to identify nonrespondents. After the deadline had passed, a follow-up was conducted by mailing a revised cover letter (Appendix D). An enthusiastic plea for the nonrespondent to participate was made. Another copy of the instrument was provided. Phone calls were also placed to each one of the nonrespondents. Seventeen more responses were generated, which raised the total participation rate to 88%.

Analysis of Data

The respondents indicated agreement or disagreement to twenty statements. The survey instrument utilized a five point Likert scale to measure the respondent's level of agreement with each statement. The researcher transferred the checkbox responses of the returned survey instruments to machine readable opscan sheets. These sheets were then electronically scored by the Instructional Evaluation Department of Southern Illinois University. An item response frequency distribution was generated, along with statement means, standard deviations, percentages and cumulative percentages. There was one missing data value.

For assessment purposes, the instrument was broken down by parts. Statements 1-9 formed part A and statements 10-20 formed part B. This was an effort to separate statements taken directly from the Nunez and Russell study covering the federal role from those statements developed by the researcher based on the Miller study covering block grants.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Treatment of Data

The purpose of the study was to solicit perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs. More specifically, the study focused on the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs.

Data for this study were gathered using a twenty statement opinionnaire. Data were analyzed and reported in two sections. The first section covered the federal role in overseeing vocational education. The second section addressed the proposed administration of federal block grants in funding vocational education. As survey instruments were received, data from surveys were coded onto general purpose electronic optiscan sheets for analysis. For the federal role in overseeing vocational education (research question one) items 1-9 were used. For the statements addressing the proposed administration of block grants, items 10-20 of the optiscan sheet were used.

On the Likert scale, 1 indicated agreement, 2 partial agreement, 3 uncertainty, 4 partial disagreement, and 5 disagreement. A response of agree was coded as an A on the scoresheet. A response of somewhat agree was coded as a B on the scoresheet, and so on. A statement with no response, which occurred in only one instance, was left blank on the scoresheet. The coded scoresheets were delivered to the Instructional Evaluation Department of Southern Illinois University for computerized analysis. The Statistical

Analysis System (SAS) was used to calculate descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and percentages for each response type.

Results

Sixty system directors were asked to participate, and 53 finally did, making the final response rate 88%. Statistical analyses were performed on all returned questionnaires.

Data collected from the opinionnaire were analyzed to address the study's two research questions.

Research Question 1:

What were the perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors concerning the federal role in vocational education?

Responses to the first nine statements on the survey questionnaire that addressed the first research question are given in Table I.

Table I
Systems Director Perceptions of the Federal Role in Vocational Education
(N=53)

	A		U	SD	D
The federal government should allow states more flexibility in the ways they may use federal vocational education funds.	28	21	0	2	2
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted for economic development purposes.	4	15	9	15	10
The federal government should allow states to set their own priorities for spending federal vocational education funds.	20	22	2	7	2
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted solely on special needs groups (handicapped, disadvantaged).	0	3	1	10	39
The federal government should set the overall goals for vocational education at all levels.	4	13	4	9	23
Federal vocational education funds should be used only for improving or expanding vocational education programs, not for maintaining programs.	15	9	4	11	14
Federal reporting requirements should apply only to federally funded programs.	39	6	3	3	2
The federal government should require comprehensive vocational education planning (e.g., program coordination between students and available jobs).	11	22	11	3	6
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted at developing occupational training in new and developing industries.	3	17	6	14	13

Where A = agree, SA = somewhat agree, U = uncertain, SD = somewhat disagree and D = disagree

In order to summarize the data given in Table I, percentages were calculated. To establish a general measure of agreement, the frequency counts for agree and somewhat agree were combined. Similarly, disagree and somewhat disagree were combined to give disagreement. Table II gives these percentages.

Table II

Systems Director Perceptions of the Federal Role in Vocational Education

	A	U	D
The federal government should allow states more flexibility in the ways they may use federal vocational education funds.	93%	0%	7%
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted for economic development purposes.	36%	17%	47%
The federal government should allow states to set their own priorities for spending federal vocational education funds.	79%	4%	17%
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted solely on special needs groups (handicapped, disadvantaged).	6%	2%	92%
The federal government should set the overall goals for vocational education at all levels.	32%	8%	60%
Federal vocational education funds should be used only for improving or expanding vocational education programs, not for maintaining programs.	45%	8%	47%
Federal reporting requirements should apply only to federally funded programs.	85%	6%	9%
The federal government should require comprehensive vocational education planning (e.g., program coordination between students and available jobs).	62%	21%	17%
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted at developing occupational training in new and developing industries.	38%	11%	51%

Where A = agreement, U = uncertainty, and D = disagreement

Those statements eliciting the greatest agreement included allowing states more flexibility in the ways they may use federal vocational education funds (93%) and allowing states to set their own priorities for spending federal vocational education funds (79%). Agreement was also found with the statement that federal reporting requirements should apply only to federally funded programs (85%), indicating that the system directors do not want federal funds to drive state and local funds. From these three statements, it appears that the system directors believe the federal government has been too prescriptive.

The EFE system directors disagreed overwhelmingly (92%) to having federal vocational education funds targeted solely to special needs groups. Disagreement was also found with the federal government setting the overall goals for vocational education (60%). However, the statement that the federal government should require comprehensive vocational education planning was generally agreed with (62%).

Data analyzed for one statement was inconclusive when examining respondents' perceptions. The statement that federal vocational education funds should be used only for improving or expanding vocational education programs, not for maintaining programs resulted in an almost equal split between agreement (45%) and disagreement (47%). The targeting of federal vocational education funds at developing occupational training in new and developing industries was generally disagreed with (51%), as was the statement that federal vocational education funds should be targeted for economic development purposes (47%).

Table III, which follows, summarizes the opinions of the system directors regarding the federal role in vocational education.

Table III

Perceptions of the Role of the Federal Government in Vocational Education

<u>Federal Government Should:</u>	<u>Federal Government Should Not</u>
◇ Allow States More Flexibility	◇ Target Economic Development
◇ Allow Priority Setting by the States	◇ Target Special Needs Groups Solely
◇ Require Comprehensive Voc. Ed. Planning	◇ Set the Overall Goals
	◇ Impose Reporting Requirements
 <u>Undecided/Split:</u>	
◇ Use of Federal Funds only for Improving or Expanding Vocational Education Programs, not for Maintaining Them	
◇ Targeting Federal Funds at Developing Occupational Training in New and Developing Industries	
◇ Consolidate Current Programs into Block Grants	

Research Question 2:

What were the perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding the proposed delivery of federal funds through block grants?

The remaining statements in the study questionnaire, supporting research question 2, requested Illinois EFE system directors to indicate their views on federal block grants for vocational education. Responses to these statements can be found in Table IV.

Table IV

Systems Director Perceptions of Federal Block Grants for Vocational Education

(N=53)

	A	SA	U	SD	D
Federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants to the states.	11	10	13	9	10
Federal funding of vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants rather than categorical grants.	8	7	15	11	12
Consolidation of federal funding of vocational education into block grants would result in reduced funding of programs in your region.	22	7	22	0	2
Programs currently funded by federal categorical grants would be continued under federal block grants without major changes.	4	3	20	11	14
By maximizing state and local discretion, the block grant vehicle encourages responsiveness to local needs.	13	16	10	8	6
Because it is a broad-aim funding vehicle that can support a range of activities, the block grant is better suited to solve today's education for employment problems.	12	14	10	6	11
Educational improvement is more likely to occur under block grant funding than categorical funding.	3	8	20	9	13
A block grant approach for vocational education would result in a lack of accountability for meeting the needs of special target populations.	8	15	14	10	6
The delivery of federal funds through block grants rather than categorical grants signals a weakening federal education for employment policy.	16	13	14	7	3
The educational aim of the block grant is to streamline the administration of federal funds for vocational education.	14	15	10	7	7
The educational block grant is the first real step by the federal government in twenty years to return decision making authority to the states and localities.	9	18	16	5	5

Where A = agree, SA = somewhat agree, U = uncertain, SD = somewhat disagree, D = disagree

In order to summarize data given in Table IV, percentages of agreement and disagreement were calculated. This was accomplished by combining the frequency counts for agree and somewhat agree to give overall agreement. Similarly, frequencies of disagree and somewhat disagree were combined to give overall disagreement. Table V gives these percentages.

Table V

Systems Director Perceptions of Federal Block Grants for Vocational Education

	A	U	D
Federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants to the states.	40%	24%	36%
Federal funding of vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants rather than categorical grants.	28%	28%	44%
Consolidation of federal funding of vocational education into block grants would result in reduced funding of programs in your region.	55%	41%	4%
Programs currently funded by federal categorical grants would be continued under federal block grants without major changes.	13%	39%	48%
By maximizing state and local discretion, the block grant vehicle encourages responsiveness to local needs.	55%	19%	26%
Because it is a broad-aim funding vehicle that can support a range of activities, the block grant is better suited to solve today's education for employment problems.	49%	19%	32%
Educational improvement is more likely to occur under block grant funding than categorical funding.	21%	38%	41%
A block grant approach for vocational education would result in a lack of accountability for meeting the needs of special target populations.	44%	26%	30%
The delivery of federal funds through block grants rather than categorical grants signals a weakening federal education for employment policy.	55%	26%	19%
The educational aim of the block grant is to streamline the administration of federal funds for vocational education.	55%	19%	26%
The educational block grant is the first real step by the federal government in twenty years to return decision making authority to the states and localities.	51%	30%	19%

Where A = agreement, U = uncertainty, and D = disagreement

Those statements eliciting the greatest amount of agreement from system directors included: the educational aim of the block grant being to streamline the administration of federal funds for vocational education (55%); the block grant encouraging responsiveness to local needs by maximizing state and local discretion (55%); and the block grant being better suited to solve today's EFE problems (49%).

System directors generally agreed that consolidation of federal funding of vocational education into block grants would result in reduced funding of programs (55%) and that the educational block grant is the first real step by the federal government in twenty years to return decision making authority to the states and localities (51%). Both of these statements, however, resulted in a high number of undecided responses, 41% and 30% respectively.

System directors disagreed with the statement that federal funding of vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants rather than categorical grants (44%). This finding is inconsistent with the responses given by the system directors to statements 1 and 3 of the federal role section. In those statements, the system directors strongly agreed that the federal government should allow the states more flexibility in the ways they may use federal dollars and in setting their own priorities for spending these funds.

Disagreement was also found with the statements that programs currently funded by federal categorical grants would be continued under federal block grants without major changes (48%) and educational improvement being more likely to occur under block grant funding than categorical funding (41%). Both of these statements resulted in a high number of undecided responses, 39% and 38% respectively.

Table VI, which follows, summarizes the opinions of the system directors regarding federal block grants for vocational education.

Table VI

Implementation of Federal Block Grant Funding

<u>Anticipated Benefits:</u>	<u>Anticipated Drawbacks:</u>
◇ Returns Decision Making Authority to States	◇ Reduced Overall Funding
◇ Encourages Responsiveness to Local Needs	◇ Major Program Changes
◇ Better Suited to Solve Today's EFE Problems	◇ No Real Educational Improvement
◇ Streamlines Federal Fund Administration	◇ Lack of Accountability
	◇ Signals Weakening Federal Policy
	◇ No More Effective Funding Method

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to solicit perceptions of Illinois EFE system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs. More specifically, the study focused on the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs.

Literature was reviewed concerning the federal role in vocational education and the federal block grant to education. Considering this review, the statements used in the instrument were selected. Results from 53 participants who completed and returned an opinionnaire were analyzed in order to determine agreement and disagreement with statements regarding the federal role in vocational education and the delivery of federal funds for vocational education programs through the block grant vehicle.

Questionnaires were mailed to the entire population of Illinois EFE system directors. The response rate was 60%. A reminder was mailed to all nonrespondents, generating additional responses. The overall response rate was 88%. Data were analyzed and reported with descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and percentages.

Illinois EFE system directors did not agree that federal funding of vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants. Forty percent of them, however, did believe that federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants. Overall the system directors believed

that the federal role should be reduced and that block grant funding was an acceptable vehicle, even with its anticipated drawbacks.

Discussion of Findings

The survey findings indicate that Illinois EFE system directors believe the following to be true: the federal government should assume a reduced role in the administration of vocational education; state and local administrators are ready to assume the increased responsibility necessitated by a reduced federal role in vocational education; the federal government should maintain a presence in guiding the vocational education field with respect to new and developing industries; and the federal government should require comprehensive program coordination between students and available jobs.

When compared to the results of the 1981 Nunez & Russell study, these findings mirror the results with one exception. State legislators disagreed that federal vocational education funds should be used only for improving or expanding vocational education programs, not for maintaining programs. Illinois system directors, however, were split on the issue, with 45% agreeing and 47% disagreeing.

Conclusions

The results of this study provide a picture of the anticipated response to delivery of federal vocational education funds through block grants. Most Illinois EFE system directors seemed to appreciate the flexibility and increased responsibility offered by the block grant. Their perception of the ideal role of the federal government appears to be

one of assistance in the development of comprehensive vocational education planning and occupational training in new and developing industries.

The federal educational block grant appeared on the funding scene in 1981, and has been both criticized and favored ever since. It remains unclear whether or not the federal investment in vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants to the states. The debate over the appropriateness and preferability of federal block grants for vocational education will undoubtedly be an issue for years to come.

Recommendations

Recommendations and suggestions for further study include the following:

1. Furnish data and conclusions of this study to Illinois education for employment system directors for review. To commend their participation, the researcher will send the information (Appendix E).
2. Provide results of this study to the other members of the Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education and Illinois Council on Vocational Education.
3. Forward a condensed version of this report to Illinois legislators so that they are apprised of the study and its findings.
4. Conduct additional research in order to generalize these findings nationally. Further studies should replicate the study with a broader sample.

5. Refine the survey instrument in an effort to reduce the number of uncertain responses. On a number of statements it appeared as though the respondents were unclear as to the meaning.
6. Publish the results of this research in an Illinois vocational education journal.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Cover Letter to Participants

May 15, 1995

<Name>
<Title>
<Address>

Dear Colleague:

I am conducting a statewide survey of proposed changes in the federal role in vocational education. This questionnaire is designed to elicit information from regional education for employment administrators about the role of the federal government in overseeing vocational education, and the proposed administration of federal block grants in funding vocational education.

Although your participation is voluntary, your reply is of great importance to the accuracy of the survey, which constitutes the basis for my graduate research paper in the Department of Workforce Education and Development at Southern Illinois University. Participation involves ten minutes or less of your time.

The project has been approved by the Carbondale Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4709. Phone: (618) 453-4543. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. John Washburn, Department of Workforce Education and Development, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4605. Phone: (618) 453-3321.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will be reported only in aggregated form. An ID number appears on the questionnaire to allow us to cross your region off our mailing list once we have received your responses. Please remove this cover page before returning the survey.

Results will be tabulated on all surveys received before May 31, 1995, and made available to those respondents who meet this cutoff date. If you have any questions or comments concerning this study, please don't hesitate to contact me at (618) 457-2923.

Thank you for your help

Sincerely,

John Scherbaum

APPENDIX B
Survey Instrument

FEDERAL ROLE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

[ID _____. ____]

For each of the following statements about the federal role in vocational education, indicate whether you agree, somewhat agree, are undecided, somewhat disagree, or disagree.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
(1) The federal government should allow states more flexibility in the ways they may use federal vocational education funds.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(2) Federal vocational education funds should be targeted for economic development purposes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(3) The federal government should allow states to set their own priorities for spending federal vocational education funds.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(4) Federal vocational education funds should be targeted solely on special need groups (handicapped, disadvantaged).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(5) The federal government should set the overall goals for vocational education at all levels.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(6) Federal vocational education funds should be used only for improving or expanding vocational education programs, not for maintaining programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(7) Federal reporting requirements should apply only to federally funded programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(8) The federal government should require comprehensive vocational education planning (e.g., program coordination between student needs and available jobs).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(9) Federal vocational education funds should be targeted at developing specific occupational training in new and developing industries.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(10) Federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants to the states.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FEDERAL FUNDING OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

For each of the following statements about federal funding of vocational education, indicate whether you agree, somewhat agree, are undecided, somewhat disagree, or disagree.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
(1) Federal funding of vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants rather than categorical grants.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(2) Consolidation of federal funding of vocational education into block grants would result in reduced funding for programs in your region.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(3) Programs currently funded by federal categorical grants would be continued under federal block grants without major changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(4) By maximizing state and local discretion, the block grant vehicle encourages responsiveness to local needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(5) Because it is a broad-aim funding vehicle that can support a range of activities, the block grant is better suited to solve today's education for employment problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(6) Educational improvement is more likely to occur under block grant funding than categorical funding.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(7) A block grant approach for vocational education would result in a lack of accountability for meeting the needs of special target populations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(8) The delivery of federal funds through block grants rather than categorical grants signals a weakening federal education for employment policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(9) The educational aim of the block grant is to streamline the administration of federal funds for vocational education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(10) The educational block grant is the first real step by the federal government in twenty years to return decision making authority to the states and localities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

APPENDIX C

Approval to Conduct Study

SIUC HSC FORM A

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES
INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

This approval is valid for one (1) year from the approval date. Researchers must request a renewal to continue the research after that date. This approval form must be included in all Master's theses/research papers and Doctoral dissertations involving human subjects to be submitted to the Graduate School.

PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions of Illinois education for
employment system Directors regarding federal
funding of vocational education.

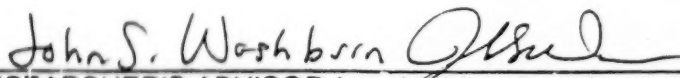
CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making this application, I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research activities involving human subjects, and that I(we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) accept responsibility for the research described, including work by students under my(our) direction, (2) obtain written approval from the Human Subjects Committee of any changes from the originally approved protocol **BEFORE** making those changes, (3) retain signed informed consent forms, in a secure location separate from the data, for at least **three** years after the completion of the research, and (4) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Chairperson of the Human Subjects Committee, Carbondale, Illinois, (618) 453-4543, and to the Director of the Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, (618) 453-4531.



John M. Scherbaum
RESEARCHER(S) or PROJECT DIRECTORS
Please print or type out name below signature

5-4-95
DATE



John S. Washburn
RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR (required for all student projects)
Please print or type out name below signature

5/5/95
DATE

The request submitted by the above researcher(s) was approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee.



Robert C. Rasthe
CHAIRPERSON, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY HUMAN
SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

5-9-95
DATE

APPENDIX D

Cover Letter to Nonrespondents

June 7, 1995

Illinois System Director Survey on Federal Block Grant Funding

Last month you received an opinionnaire concerning the role of the federal government in overseeing vocational education, and the proposed administration of federal block grants in funding vocational education.

We have not yet received your response. It would be greatly appreciated, both as an indication of your genuine interest in the problem under investigation, and as a demonstration of professional courtesy.

Statewide, the response rate of your colleagues has been good.

By participating in this study and sharing your opinions, you do more than ensure the validity and reliability of a graduate student's research paper.

There have been very few previous studies on this topic, let alone one focusing on Illinois. Conclusions of this study will undoubtedly be evaluated and considered by many others, as our intent is to publish the results.

- Standard Research Information -

This project has been approved by the Carbondale Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects. Participation is voluntary and involves less than ten minutes. Answers will be kept strictly confidential and will be reported only in aggregated form. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4709. Phone: (618) 453-4543. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. John Washburn, Department of Workforce Education and Development, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4605. Phone: (618) 453-3321. I may be reached at: (618) 457-2923.

A results summary will be mailed to all participants. If for no other reason, use this as a convenient opportunity to learn the current opinions of other Illinois system directors.

The issue is both current and important, so unless you have a fundamental reason for not participating, won't you please take this moment to respond?

This cover page should be removed before returning the survey.

Sincerely,

John Scherbaum

APPENDIX E

Results Summary Provided to System Directors

John M. Scherbaum
P. O. Box 2303, Carbondale, IL 62902-2303
(618) 457-2923

7-5-95

Enclosed are the results of the May/June 1995 survey of education for employment system directors. The purpose of the study was to solicit perceptions of Illinois education for employment system directors regarding proposed changes in federal funding for vocational education programs. More specifically, the study focused on the changing role of the federal government in vocational education and the proposed federal block grant financing of state-run vocational education programs. The study was the basis of a graduate research paper in the Department of Workforce, Education and Development - Southern Illinois University.

The survey instrument included twenty statements to which the respondents indicated agreement or disagreement using a five point Likert scale. In order to summarize the results, the responses of agree and somewhat agree were combined and reported as agreement. Likewise, disagree and somewhat disagree were combined and reported as disagreement. A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed, and 53 completed questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 88%.

The results of this study provide a picture of the anticipated response to delivery of federal vocational education funds through block grants. Most system directors seemed to appreciate the flexibility and increased responsibility which might be offered by the block grant. They did not, however, agree that federal funding for vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants, nor did they believe that federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants.

Overall, system directors thought that the federal role in the vocational education program should be reduced. Their perception of the ideal role of the federal government appears to be one of assistance in the development of comprehensive vocational education planning between students and available jobs, and occupational training for new and developing industries. Selected tables from the study are attached

Perceptions of the Role of the Federal Government in Vocational Education

Federal Government Should:

- ◇ Allow States More Flexibility
- ◇ Allow Priority Setting by the States
- ◇ Require Comprehensive Voc. Ed. Planning

Federal Government Should Not:

- ◇ Target Economic Development
- ◇ Target Special Needs Groups Solely
- ◇ Set the Overall Goals
- ◇ Impose Reporting Requirements

Undecided/Split:

- ◇ Use of Federal Funds only for Improving or Expanding Vocational Education Programs, not for Maintaining Them
- ◇ Targeting Federal Funds at Developing Occupational Training in New and Developing Industries
- ◇ Consolidate Current Programs into Block Grants

Implementation of Federal Block Grant Funding

Anticipated Benefits:

- ◇ Returns Decision Making Authority to States
- ◇ Encourages Responsiveness to Local Needs
- ◇ Better Suited to Solve Today's EFE Problems
- ◇ Streamlines Federal Fund Administration

Anticipated Drawbacks:

- ◇ Reduced Overall Funding
- ◇ Major Program Changes
- ◇ No Real Educational Improvement
- ◇ Lack of Accountability
- ◇ Signals Weakening Federal Policy
- ◇ No More Effective Funding Method

1995 Illinois System Director Survey
 Perceptions of the Federal Role in Vocational Education
 (N=53, 88% Response Rate)

	Agreement	Uncertainty	Disagreement
The federal government should allow states more flexibility in the ways they may use federal vocational education funds.	93%	0%	7%
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted for economic development purposes.	36%	17%	47%
The federal government should allow states to set their own priorities for spending federal vocational education funds.	79%	4%	17%
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted solely on special needs groups (handicapped, disadvantaged).	6%	2%	92%
The federal government should set the overall goals for vocational education at all levels.	32%	8%	60%
Federal vocational education funds should be used only for improving or expanding vocational education programs, not for maintaining programs.	45%	8%	47%
Federal reporting requirements should apply only to federally funded programs.	85%	6%	9%
The federal government should require comprehensive vocational education planning (e.g., program coordination between students and available jobs).	62%	21%	17%
Federal vocational education funds should be targeted at developing occupational training in new and developing industries.	38%	11%	51%

1995 Illinois System Director Survey
 Perceptions of Federal Funding for Vocational Education
 (N=53, 88% Response Rate)

	Agreement	Uncertainty	Disagreement
Federal funding for vocational education should be consolidated and administered through block grants to the states.	40%	24%	36%
Federal funding of vocational education programs in Illinois would be more effective using block grants rather than categorical grants.	28%	28%	44%
Consolidation of federal funding of vocational education into block grants would result in reduced funding of programs in your region.	55%	41%	4%
Programs currently funded by federal categorical grants would be continued under federal block grants without major changes.	13%	39%	48%
By maximizing state and local discretion, the block grant vehicle encourages responsiveness to local needs.	55%	19%	26%
Because it is a broad-aim funding vehicle that can support a range of activities, the block grant is better suited to solve today's education for employment problems.	49%	19%	32%
Educational improvement is more likely to occur under block grant funding than categorical funding.	21%	38%	41%
A block grant approach for vocational education would result in a lack of accountability for meeting the needs of special target populations.	44%	26%	30%
The delivery of federal funds through block grants rather than categorical grants signals a weakening federal education for employment policy.	55%	26%	19%
The educational aim of the block grant is to streamline the administration of federal funds for vocational education.	55%	19%	26%
The educational block grant is the first real step by the federal government in twenty years to return decision making authority to the states and localities.	51%	30%	19%

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

John M. Scherbaum
Post Office Box 2303
Carbondale, IL 62902

Date of Birth: September 17, 1967

University of Iowa, 1990
Bachelor of Arts, Economics

Research Paper Title: Illinois Education for Employment System Director Perceptions of
the Federal Role and Federal Block Grant Funding in Vocational
Education

Major Advisor: Dr. John S. Washburn